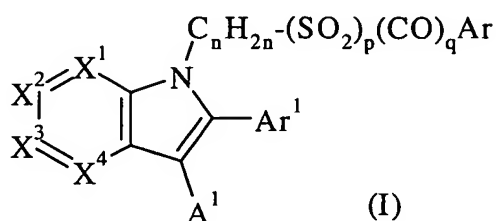


IN THE CLAIMS

The listing of the claims which follows replaces any and all prior versions and/or listings of the claims in the application.

1. (original) A compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof:



wherein:

Ar is a moiety containing at least one aromatic ring and possesses 5-, 6-, 9- or 10-ring atoms 0 to 3 of which may be N, O or S heteroatoms of which at most 1 will be O or S; which moiety may be optionally substituted by groups Q^1, Q^2 or Q^3 wherein Q^1 is a hydroxy group, fluorine, chlorine, bromine or iodine atom or a C_{1-6} alkyl, C_{1-6} alkyl substituted by not more than 5 fluorine atoms, C_{1-6} alkoxyl, C_{1-6} alkoxyl substituted by not more than 5 fluorine atoms, C_{2-6} alkenyl, C_{2-6} alkynyl, $(CH_2)_{0-3}N(C_{1-4}alkyl)_2$, nitro, cyano, nitrile, carboxyl, esterified carboxy wherein the esterifying moiety has up to 4 carbon atoms optionally substituted by not more than 5 fluorine atoms; or $-SO_2(C_{1-6}alkyl)$,
 Q^2 is a fluorine, chlorine, bromine or iodine atom or a methyl, trifluoromethyl, methoxy, trifluoromethoxy or difluoromethoxy group,
 Q^3 is a fluorine, chlorine, bromine or iodine atom or a methyl, methoxy, trifluoromethoxy or difluoromethoxy group;

Ar^1 is a moiety containing at least one aromatic ring and possesses 5-, 6-, 9- or 10-ring atoms 0 to 3 of which may be N, O or S heteroatoms of which at most 1 will be O or S; which moiety may be optionally substituted by groups Q^4, Q^5 or Q^6 wherein Q^4 is a hydroxy group, fluorine, chlorine, bromine or iodine atom or a C_{1-6} alkyl, C_{1-6} alkyl substituted by not more than 5 fluorine atoms, C_{1-6} alkoxyl, C_{1-6} alkoxyl substituted by not more than 5 fluorine atoms, C_{2-6} alkenyl or alkynyl, nitro, cyano, nitrile, carboxyl, esterified carboxy wherein the esterifying moiety has up to 4 carbon atoms optionally substituted by not more than 5 fluorine atoms,

Q⁵ is a fluorine, chlorine, bromine or iodine atom or a methyl, trifluoromethyl, methoxy, trifluoromethoxy or difluoromethoxy group,

Q⁶ is a fluorine, chlorine, bromine or iodine atom or a methyl, methoxy, trifluoromethoxy or difluoromethoxy group;

X¹ is N or CR^a; X² is N or CR¹; X³ is N or CR²; X⁴ is N or CR^b; with the proviso that at least one of X² and X³ is not N; wherein R^a and R^b are independently selected from hydrogen, fluorine or chlorine or C₁₋₄alkyl, C₂₋₄alkenyl, C₁₋₄alkoxy, C₁₋₄alkyl or alkoxy optionally substituted by up to 6 fluorine atoms and/or a hydroxyl group;

n is 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6;

p+q is 0 or 1;

A¹ is C₁₋₆alkyl, C₂₋₆alkenyl, or C₁₋₆alkyl or C₂₋₆alkenyl substituted by C₁₋₄alkoxy or up to 5 fluorine atoms or a non-aromatic ring of 3 to 8 ring atoms which may contain a double bond and which may contain a O, S, SO, SO₂ or NH moiety and which may be optionally substituted by one or two alkyl groups of up to 2 carbon atoms or by 1 to 8 fluorine atoms;

one of R¹ and R² is a Het or is hydrogen, fluorine, chlorine or bromine atom or a C₁₋₄alkyl, C₂₋₄alkenyl, C₁₋₄alkoxy, C₁₋₄alkyl or alkoxy substituted by up to 5 fluorine atoms, nitrile, carboxy, C₁₋₄alkoxycarbonyl, C₁₋₄alkyl or C₂₋₄alkenyl substituted by a carboxy or C₁₋₄alkoxycarbonyl group, or a NR³R⁴, SO₂NR³R⁴ or CONR³R⁴ group where R³ is hydrogen, C₁₋₄alkyl, SO₂R⁵ or COR⁵ and R⁴ is hydrogen, hydroxyl or C₁₋₄alkyl or R³ and R⁴ are alkylene linked to form a 5- or 6-membered ring, and R⁵ is C₁₋₄alkyl optionally substituted by up to 5 fluorine atoms;

Het is a 5 or 6-membered aromatic ring of which 1, 2, 3 or 4 ring atoms may be selected from N, O, S with at most 1 being O or S which ring may be substituted by 1 or 2 groups selected C₁₋₄alkyl or hydroxy or tautomers thereof, or is 2-hydroxy-cyclobutene-3,4-dione;

the other of R¹ and R² is a hydrogen, fluorine or chlorine atom or C₁₋₄alkyl, C₂₋₄alkenyl, C₁₋₄alkoxy, C₁₋₄alkyl or alkoxy substituted by up to 6 fluorine atoms and optionally a hydroxyl.

2. (original) A compound as claimed in Claim 1 wherein R^a is hydrogen.

3. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in ~~Claim 1~~ or Claim 2 wherein R^b is hydrogen.

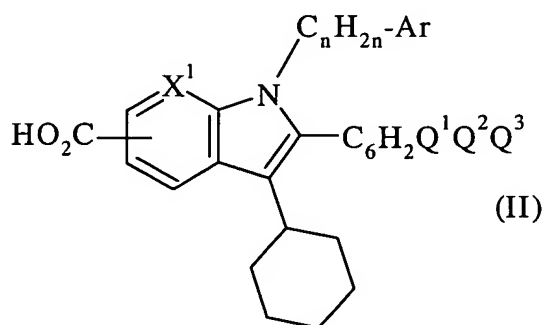
4. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in Claim 3 ~~any one of Claims 1 to 3~~ wherein Ar is optionally substituted phenyl, pyridyl, imidazolyl, thiazolyl or oxadiazolyl, where the optional substituent is selected from fluorine, chlorine, bromine, C₁₋₆alkyl, hydroxyl, C₁₋₆alkoxy, CF₃, cyano, carboxyl, methylsulfonyl and (CH₂)₀₋₃N(C₁₋₄alkyl)₂.

5. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in Claim 4 ~~any one of Claims 1 to 4~~ wherein n is 0, 1 or 2.

6. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in Claim 5 ~~any one of Claims 1 to 5~~ wherein Ar¹ is phenyl, naphthyl, indolyl, tetrahydronaphthyl, pyridyl, imidazolyl, furyl, thienyl, pyrrolidyl, oxazolyl, thiazolyl, pyrazolyl, pyridazolyl, triazolyl, oxadiazolyl, thiodiazolyl or quinonyl, optionally substituted by Q⁴, Q⁵ or Q⁶ as defined in Claim 1.

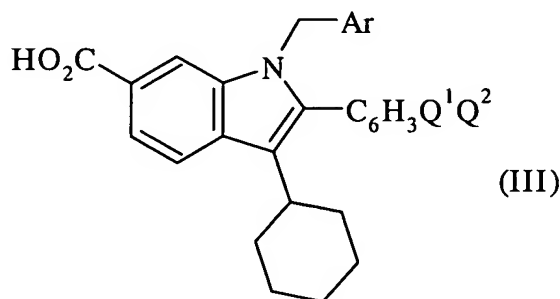
7. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in Claim 6 ~~any one of Claims 1 to 6~~ wherein Ar is cyclohexyl.

8. (currently amended) A compound as claimed in Claim 1 of formula (II):



wherein n, X¹, Ar, Q¹, Q² and Q³ are as defined in Claim 1 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

9. (currently amended) A compound according to claim 8 of formula (III):



~~wherein Ar, Q¹ and Q² are defined in Claim 1~~ or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

10. (original) A compound as claimed in Claim 1 selected from:

1-benzyl-3-cyclohexyl-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-5-carboxylic acid,
1-benzyl-3-cyclohexyl-2-pyridin-2-yl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
1-benzyl-3-cyclohexyl-2-(4-methoxyphenyl)-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-1,2-diphenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
1-benzyl-3-cyclohexyl-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-1-(4-methylbenzyl)-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-1-[(2-methyl-1,3-thiazol-4-yl)methyl]-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-1-(3-methylbenzyl)-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-2-phenyl-1-(pyridin-2-ylmethyl)-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid trifluoroacetate,
3-cyclohexyl-1-[4-(methylsulfonyl)benzyl]-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-1-(3,5-dibromobenzyl)-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-1-(1*H*-imidazol-4-ylmethyl)-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid trifluoroacetate,
3-cyclohexyl-2-phenyl-1-(pyridin-3-ylmethyl)-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid hydrochloride,
3-cyclohexyl-2-(2-fluorophenyl)-1-(2-phenylethyl)-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
1-(3-cyanobenzyl)-3-cyclohexyl-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-2-phenyl-1-(pyridin-2-ylmethyl)-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid hydrochloride,
1-(3-carboxybenzyl)-3-cyclohexyl-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-2-(4-hydroxyphenyl)-1-[(4-methylphenyl)sulfonyl]-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
1-benzoyl-3-cyclohexyl-2-phenyl-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-2-phenyl-1-(phenylsulfonyl)-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,

1-benzyl-3-cyclohexyl-2-(3-{[isopropyl(methyl)amino]-methyl}phenyl)-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
3-cyclohexyl-1-({5-[(dimethylamino)methyl]-1,2,4-oxadiazol-3-yl}methyl)-2-phenyl-1-1*H*-indole-6-carboxylic acid,
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

11. (canceled)

12. (canceled)

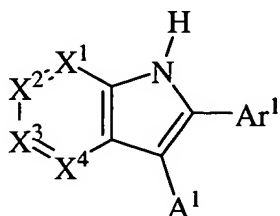
13. (currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound as claimed in Claim 1, ~~any one of Claims 1 to 10,~~ or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, in association with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

14. (currently amended) The pharmaceutical composition as claimed in Claim 13 which further comprises one or more other agents for the treatment of viral infections. ~~infections such as an antiviral agent, or an immunomodulatory agent such as α , β or γ interferon.~~

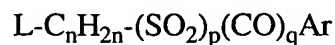
15. (currently amended) A method of inhibiting hepatitis C virus polymerase and/or of treating or preventing an illness due to hepatitis C virus, which comprises ~~the method involving~~ administering to a human or animal (~~preferably mammalian~~) subject suffering from the condition a therapeutically or prophylactically effective amount of ~~the pharmaceutical composition claimed in Claim 13 or Claim 14 or of~~ a compound as claimed in Claim 1, ~~any one of Claims 1 to 10,~~ or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

16. (currently amended) A method of preparation of a pharmaceutical composition, which comprises ~~involving~~ admixing at least one compound as claimed in Claim 1, ~~any one of Claims 1 to 10,~~ or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, with one or more pharmaceutically acceptable adjuvants, diluents or carriers and/or with one or more other therapeutically or prophylactically active agents.

17. (currently amended) A process to prepare a compound as claimed in Claim 1 ~~any one of Claims 1 to 10~~ which comprises the reaction of compounds of the formulae (IV) and (V):



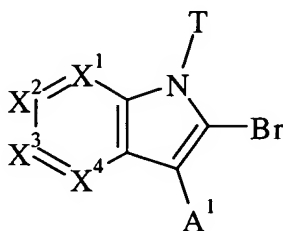
(IV)



(V)

wherein X^1 , X^2 , X^3 , X^4 , A^1 , Ar^1 , Ar , n , p and q are as defined in Claim 1 and L is a ~~good~~ leaving group. ~~group such as chlorine, bromine, iodine, methanesulfonate, tolyenesulfonate, triflate or the like.~~

18. (currently amended) A process to prepare a compound as claimed in Claim 1 ~~any one of Claims 1 to 10~~ which comprises reacting the compound of the formula (VI):



(VI)

wherein T is a $C_nH_{2n}(SO_2)_p(CO)_qAr$ group with $Ar^1B(OH)_2$ in the presence of a $Pd[0]$ catalyst wherein X^1 , X^2 , X^3 , X^4 , A^1 , Ar^1 , Ar , n , p and q are as defined in Claim 1.

19. (new) A method for inhibiting hepatitis C virus polymerase or treating or preventing an illness due to hepatitis C virus, which comprises administering to a human or animal subject suffering from the condition a therapeutically or prophylactically effective amount of the pharmaceutical composition of Claim 13.